

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

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The Anatomy of Dime Novels

No. 8 — Civil War Novels

By J. Edward Leithead



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES NO. 95

NEW YORK BOYS LIBRARY

Publisher: Norman L. Munro, 74 Beekman St., New York, N. Y. Schedule of Issue: Irregular. Issues: 138. Price: 10c. Dates: September 5, 1877 to July 1, 1878. Pages: 24 to 96 pages. Size: 11¼x8¼. Illustrations: black and white cover, many issues contained numerous illustrations within as well. Contents: Reprint of English penny dreadfuls and of serials from Boys of New York. Some of the works of Dickens, Capt. Marryat and other famous writers were also represented.

The Anatomy of Dime Novels

No. 8 — Civil War Novels

By J. Edward Leithead

Echoes of the Civil War's big guns and musketry—and yes, the old Rebel yell—can be found in many old-time novels, from black-and-whites to color covers. If this were September, 1883, and you wanted to spend a dime on reading matter, it couldn't be better invested than in a copy of War Library No. 1, *Major Hotspur*, or, *Kilpatrick's Dashing Rider*, by Marline Manly, just out! A rattling good story of the War Between the States; size of the novel, 8½x12, with a woodcut cover illustration of undoubted excellence, and bearing the imprint of the Novelist Publishing Co. (Street & Smith).

Nothing in noveldom ever surpassed this War Library for tales of the Civil War, written mostly from the Union viewpoint, and covering not only well-known battles like Gettysburg, Shiloh, Antietam, Chicamauga and "The Wilderness," but also such a wealth of "unwritten history of the war" as to indicate considerable research on the part of the various authors. A very able staff of authors was selected for the task of producing the 412 numbers of the Library and one special unnumbered issue, *Life and Military Services of General U. S. Grant*, priced at 20 cents, and written by W. Howard Van Orden (the real name of an author who sometimes used the pseudonyms "Howard De Vere," "Paul Braddon" and "Orrin G. Welch"). He penned other biographies of general officers in the Library, #158, *General William T. Sherman. A Story of His Life and Military Services*, and #176, *General Phil Sheridan. A Story of His*

Life and Military Services.

Not by any means were all 412 issues of the War Library originals. #85, *Major Hotspur*, a repeat of #1, begins the reprints, sandwiched between new stories. The next is #88, *Shiloh*, reprint of #6, then #90, *Sharpshooter Dick*, reprint of #3. This goes on until there are more reprints than originals, if any of the latter.

One of the most prolific (and highly readable) writers of dime and nickel novels, Harry St. George Rathborne, who got his start with Publisher Norman L. Munro, authored #1 of the War Library as "Marline Manly," used the same pseudonym on #9, *Prison Pen*, #45, *Clear Grit*, #52, *Marching On*, #62, *Fighting Joe Hooker*, and so on. He switched to the pen name "Ward Edwards" to write #2, *Blue or Gray*, #6, *Shiloh*, #12, *Sold for a Soldier*, #60, *A Yankee Middy*, #67, *In for the War*, etc.

He took the pen name "Major Hugh Warren" in writing #17, *Stars and Stripes*, which, reprinted later in the series, appears to be the only one under this pseudonym unless #150, *Life in Libby Prison* by "Col. U. S. Warren" is a variant of "Major Hugh Warren."

Next he used an abbreviation of his own name, Harry St. George, in penning #46, *The Rival Couriers*, "Hugh Allen" in writing #48, *Down in Dixie*, "Lieutenant Keene" in authoring #56, *Black Cudjo*, "Aleck Forbes" in producing #75, *Skirmisher Sam*, the byline "Duke Duncan" on #79, *Wilson's Creek*, and "Wayne Miller" on #115,

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Sheridan's Spy.

Thos. C. Harbaugh wrote many of the series under the nom. "Major A. F. Grant"—#4, On to Richmond, #13, True Blue, #19, Cannoneer Bob, #26, Iron and Steel, #33, Farragut's Spy, #40, Morgan's Rough Riders, #47, Before Petersburg, etc. It's quite possible that Harbaugh, a top-notch writer of historical tales of both Civil War and Revolutionary War, used other pen names in the War Library. "Captain Mark Wilton" and "Corporal Morris Hoyne" were pseudonyms of William H. Manning, "Morris Redwing" was James Milford Merrill and "Col. Oram Efflor" was Maro Rolfe.

Without attempting a complete (and perhaps tiresome) listing of all that they contributed to the War Library, I know that "Bernard Wayde" or "Wade" was the pen name of Gerald Carlton, author of #15, Fighting Pat; possibly he used his own surname on #25, Dashing O'Donohoe, by Lieutenant Carlton. "Mon Myrtle" was really Maurice C. Walsh, author of #53, Sword and Sash, the same "M. C. Walsh" writing under his own name such tales as #119, Down in Virginia and #160, Brave Men. J. M. Merrill was the real name of an author who also wrote for Beadle, one of his for the War Library being #97, A Night in Dixie. George W. Goode, the real name of a Beadle and Tousey author, wrote #172 The Fighting Fool. I believe that Edgar L. Vincent was the real name of the author of #11, Before Donelson. Apparently Ned Buntline, who usually did a good job of this type of novel, wrote only one tale for this Library, #264, Life in the Saddle, and that under his own name, Col. E. Z. C. Judson. His first Buffalo Bill story, serialized in the New York Weekly, could really be classed as a Civil War tale instead of a Wild West adventure yarn. Also using his own name, Major Samuel Stone Hall ("Buckskin Sam") wrote #282, Wild Bill, the Union Scout of Missouri.

Along with the fictional heroes, there probably isn't a prominent historical figure of the Civil War whose

name does not appear in one or more titles. I have mentioned several already, here are others:

- #44—Sheridan's Ride.
- 55—Mosby's Trail.
- 65—Custer and His Men.
- 71—Out With Kilpatrick.
- 124—Shelby's Men.
- 127—Grant, "The Hammerer."
- 132—Under Little Mac (Gen. George B. McClellan)
- 136—Major Pauline Cushman (famous woman spy for the Union, who had exciting adventures in the far West after the war).
- 178—John Brown's Raid.
- 180—Lincoln's Spy (there are several issues about the Secret Service and Army detectives during the Rebellion).
- 154—Hawkins' Zouaves.
- 233—Phil, the Scout, or, The Fight for Beauregard's Dispatches.
- 252—Fremont, the Pathfinder (what befell him as a Union General in Missouri).
- 255—Stonewall Jackson's Dispatch Bearer.
- 257—The Old Knapsack, or, Longstreet's Mad Charge at Knoxville. (General Longstreet was one of Lee's ablest officers, advised his commander against George Pickett's disastrous charge at Gettysburg).
- 262—Old Brax, the Sharpshooter, or, Through Fire in Lee's Last Campaign (the only time that General Lee's name appears in a title).
- 317—Sherman at Atlanta.

Some titles toward the end of the Library are somewhat changed, so that, at first glance, they look like new stories—which they are not. No matter, the War Library was tops in Civil War fact and fiction, on land and afloat, and even in the air, for #73 was The Sky Scouts, or, Ballooning for the Union.

A pocket edition of the War Library proved not very popular, ending with #12.

The Army and Navy Library, same type novel as the large-sized War Library and published by Street &

Smith in 1883, ran to about 28 issues. Civil War tales predominated; there were 22 of them, the other 6 issues consisting of 3 stories of the American Revolution, one of the Texan War for Independence, one of the Mexican War and one of the Kentucky frontier. No question about there being plenty of reprints. #2 is a reprint of War Library #118, though the author is changed; #3 a reprint of War Library #116, with the author changed; #6 a reprint of War Library #263, author the same; #13 a reprint of War Library #128; author the same; #14 a reprint of War Library #138, author the same; #18 a reprint of War Library #122, no change in author. I have a feeling that very few, if any of the Civil War items in Army and Navy Library are new stories.

Here is a battle scene from War Library #394, *The Old Knapsack*, or, *Longstreet's Mad Charge at Knoxville*, by "Marline Manly" (Harry St. George Rathborne, equally skillful at writing a war story, a cowboy story (Ted Strong), an Indian-fighting story (Buffalo Bill), stories of outlaws (the James Boys, the Dalton Gang), or a detective story. *The Old Knapsack* was earlier published as #257, and in both issues, on the inside title page the author is given as "Aleck Forbes, War Correspondent," while author on the cover is "Marline Manly." This works out all right, however, since "Aleck Forbes" was also one of the pseudonyms St. George Rathborne used in this series). Now the story:

"All day long on the 28th the rebel skirmishers pressed the Union lines on the north and northwest fronts in a manner that could have but one meaning. They were not retreating. Longstreet was preparing for an overwhelming assault. By massing his columns in this quarter and hurling them in compact formation upon the Union works, the strength of which had not been severely tested, the famous lieutenant of Lee hoped to create a break in the barriers opposing him.

"Once this was done he had no fears as to the result. Like the waters of the swollen Mississippi rushing

through a crevasse in the embankment, his men would pour, a living flood, into this opening, and the game would be won.

"Every man was at his post that night. The moon was shining brightly. Between eleven and twelve o'clock a heavy assault was made upon the whole of the Union left, from the river up to a point beyond the railroad. The rebels advanced in strong battle array. Sharp skirmishing ensued, resulting in the falling back of the pickets. A heavy cannonade was kept up all night, the fire of the big guns being directed by the flash of Confederate rifles and the gleam of bivouac fires in their rear.

"Daylight came at last. The Union army had managed to snatch a little sleep by turns during the night, but intense excitement reigned at the point where the expected attack was to come. With the gray of early morning the long roll sounded, and blue-clad figures sprang to their posts. In three columns the foe was seen advancing toward Fort Sanders in a direction oblique to the Loudon Road.

"Almost immediately the Federal artillery opened upon them with shell and canister. Nor were the Confederate guns idle. There was a sudden roar and a crash as a rebel battery on a high hill across the river was unmasked. They had occupied this place unknown to the Union forces, and were now able to pour a hot flank fire upon the defenders of Knoxville.

"The Federal fort and rifle-pits were fairly well protected by dense wings of earth and bales of cotton, so that the fire of this battery, from which the rebels had expected much, caused little harm. About the same time the other batteries of the enemy in front and on the right flank of the fort opened with their whole power, but they had no better success.

"The roar of battle now was deafening. There was the earth-shaking crash of the heavy guns, the bursting of shells, the rattling discharge of great volleys of musketry, and the exciting yells of men, almost drowned out by the cannonading. In spite of

all, the gray-clad host came on. Many of them were veterans from the Virginia battlefields, who had marched to victory under Beauregard and Lee, and the mighty thunder of battle had no special terrors for them.

"Advancing with brigade front, they swept over the railroad embankment like a countless army of ants moving through an African jungle. Their movements quickened as the ground presented less obstruction. At last, as they emerged from the thinning timber, they broke into an impetuous charge. Across the open between the timber and the fort, dotted with the stumps of trees that had gone into the making of the stockade, they came with a rush that was both valiant and awe-inspiring. Nothing, it seemed, could stop that mad charge. These men in gray ran as though they were beyond the fear of death. Would they keep on until the fort itself was gained, over-running first the rifle-pits, then climbing the walls, defying resistance from the firing platforms? Some carried scaling ladders.

"The answer lay in a strong telegraph wire which had been stretched from stump to stump through the low brushwood and securely coiled around each of those remnants of trees. It was out of the ordinary range of vision. The mind that had conceived this method of concealing the wire so that it would not be readily destroyed and cut off the chance of summoning reinforcements, might well rest content, for it was one means of saving Fort Sanders. The head of the column struck the wire, tripped headlong and was buried for frantic moments by the piling up of those pounding at their heels. The struggling mass of men up front blocked the advance of their comrades. While this confusion lasted the guns of the fort had full sweep at short range, and poured in their rounds thick and fast. Nor were the blue-coated infantrymen on the firing platforms, misted figures in the cannon and rifle smoke, inactive. Their Springfields added to the stunning din as the embrasures of the fort and the whole parapet seemed

to be in one continual blaze. And there was a terrible gap in the gray ranks as those who were able struggled upright, trying to reform ranks.

"Knoxville was still in Union hands after that battle. The Confederates had never shown greater courage and desperation, advancing up the slope to the very muzzles of the guns that belched fire and shot from Fort Sanders. A singular sight it was to see veterans in blue mingling with veterans in gray, both sadly performing the last rights for the dead . . .

"The Confederate loss was over five hundred in killed and wounded, and several hundred prisoners also fell into Union hands. The Federal loss was exactly twenty-two in all—a disparity which finds no parallel in American history save in the battle of New Orleans, which in so many ways the assault strongly resembled."

(to be continued)

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Boyhood Heroes*

Fred Fearnot vs. Young Wild West

"Nimble Ike," Trick Ventriloquist, Greatest Of 'Em All

By Don Buchan

When I was a small boy "home work" meant the chores after school. It meant carrying in cobs, carrying out ashes, shoveling the sidewalks in winter, mowing the lawn in summer, raking it in the fall.

Our leisure time was spent down by the river. Bullheads of the four ounce size were caught by the millions. Every home had a manure pile that housed little red worms that were highly prized for bait. The swimming hole was in the narrows of the Ocheyedan a few rods of where it joined the Little Sioux.

In the winter months we trapped muskrat and civet cats. An occasional mink proved our skill as they are notoriously trap shy.

There were no so-called comic books. We read Zane Grey and the Rover Boys. We followed the adventures of Mark Tidd in the American Boy Magazine. When I located a series about The Long Rifleman of Kentucky in the library, I was as elated as a prospector who finds a nugget of pure gold. "Treasure Island" was a source of great joy. In our imaginations we floated down the Mississippi with Huck Finn and Jim, the runaway slave, on a raft. Later we shared adventures with Penrod and Sam and enjoyed their friends, Herman, Ferand and Verman.

Paperback books are not new. We secretly gloated over paperbacks. For five cents we got such noble literature as "Young Wild West." We marvelled at the intelligence of his aristocratic stallion, Wildfire. We shared his companionship with Cheyenne Charlie. We even learned to tolerate his girl friend, Arietta, because she could ride and shoot, too.

The 5 cent series included such classics as Fred Fearnot, "Denver Dan," "Dick Lightheart," and "Zola. the Old Trapper's Daughter." A gunshot was always a crack, never a

boom or bang or zing and someone bit the dust on every page.

Our lives were entwined with these sterling characters, and out of our deep study there emerged a mystery. I helped solve that mystery and here is the tale.

An old gentleman who lived in the south part of town across the main street bridge, asked me a question. He was well read, having devoured "Deadwood Dick," "The James Boys," "Old Cap Collier," "The Liberty Boys of '76," and all the rest.

His question, asked in all sincerity, and accepted by me in the same way, was this: Who was the greatest of them all? Who would have emerged victorious if they were pitted against each other? You have the same imponderable question today in regard to prize fighters. Who was the greatest of all time?

This old gentleman had done a lot of reading and research and had it down to the last two. Young Wild West and Fred Fearnot. There he was stuck. Couldn't choose between them.

I didn't give him an answer for I didn't want to embarrass or humiliate him. But I knew the answer. He had left out the greatest, the most resourceful, the king of them all.

Let me tell you how I made the acquaintance of this invincible fellow.

Gordon and Russell Rassmussen had an old white horse and a spring wagon, and together with Irving England, and Bernard Bisbee, we wrangled permission from our folks to take an exploring trip around the local country. We had a sheet of canvas and a rope to make a make-shift tent. We commandeered coffee and canned goods from home and we were soon on our way.

We each had bags and bags of Buffalo tobacco for our hand rolled cig-

arettes. Buffalo was two bags for a nickel, at Welly Cravers and Bull Durham was a nickel a bag, straight. Of course we had grown-ups buy it for us. Every time we wanted to roll one, we had to stop the horse or we'd lose all of the tobacco because of the rocking and jolting of the wagon.

But our greatest burden—and one that almost killed Gordon and Russell—was the Rasmussen parents. They had a new Buick, and they drove around and around the section so they'd meet us at the end of every mile. It was plumb disgusting to be way out west and on the lookout for Indians and then have that Buick show up at every crossroads.

With one thing and another to annoy us, we made only about six miles the first day. We camped in a grove west of town and when Bernard unpacked the loot and plunder he had foraged from home, out fell a thick paperback book he had filched from grandpa's trunk.

"Nimble Ike, the Trick Ventriloquist" was the title and it packed all the adventures a boy could wish between its two covers, believe me!

The others were fascinated and agreed to do the chores and dishes after supper if I'd read it aloud so we could share it at the same time.

When I finished the sun was peeking over the eastern horizon and we were dead for sleep, but we had solved the mystery. We knew who the greatest really was.

You see, Nimble Ike was an orphan. He had been raised by a cruel master who made him be a ventriloquist, a contortionist, and a master of disguise. He planned to use his abilities in various nefarious enterprises, so naturally, Ike ran away.

Once Ike was free from his cruel master, he used all his talents to do things no other hero ever attempted. It almost made us wish we'd been orphans and raised by a cruel master so we could do the things Ike could do.

Now you take Young Wild West or Fred Farnot or anyone you favor and give him the ability to throw his

voice. If a fiendish bandit gets the drop on him, what does he do? Why, he throws his voice behind the bandit and hollers "Hands Up" in a gruff voice. If the bandit turns to see who is behind him, our hero whips out his trusty six-shooter and salivates him. Right?

Well, sir, there's the difference. No style. No finesse. And suppose your fiendish bandit is Mexican or a Hottentot or an Eskimo who doesn't speak American. What good would it do to throw your voice behind him and command "hands up" in a gruff voice?

Let me tell you about Nimble Ike. You could take Ike and put the handcuffs on him. Tie him. Bind him in wet, shrinking, rawhide. Put an Oregon boot on each leg. Shackle him. Gag him with a filthy rag the way they always did. Put him in a strait jacket. Dump him into a gunny bag and throw him into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Or the Pacific. In the deepest part.

Three pages later Ike would show up disguised as a Hindu mendicant or a deaf and dumb Chinese cook working in the ship's galley, and no one the wiser. Your only clew would be his hair was a little damp.

Now you go to work and put Ike in a cave, faced with a horde of fiendish bandits. Fill the mouth of the cave with Mexican bandits who can't speak any word of American. Put in some bloodthirsty Apache Indians. I don't care. Some Maoris with assigais. Some Eskimos who haven't tasted meat in a long while.

Do you know what Ike would do? Oh, yes, he'd throw his voice all right. He'd throw it outside the entrance to the cave. But Ike had style. His voice would come a rumbling back inside that cave sounding like a whole company of Mexican Federals on horseback. That would draw the attention of the fiendish Mexican bandits. Then there would come the fearful war cry of the Yaqui Indians. That would divert the attention of the Apaches. Then the sound of a herd of stampeding elephants to distract the

Hottentots. Then a noise like a polar bear chasing a seal to turn the heads of the Eskimos.

That was Ike's way. Simple. But gaudy, too.

But he hasn't overcome them yet. He's merely drawn their attention away from him, see? He couldn't shoot them all. Anyhow, that wasn't Ike's way. He had class and style.

But he'd turn their heads. When all eyes were looking toward the front of the cave, quick as a weasel, he'd twist that wiry body into the exact shape of a wheelbarrow.

When the bandits turned around they wouldn't see Ike any more. Just a rusty old wheelbarrow standing there as if some miner had left it long ago.

Then the bandits would start to squabble and quarrel among themselves because their victim had escaped. You know the way fiendish bandits always do.

That would be little Ike's chance. He'd roll out of that cave and gather up the diamonds or the gold and jewels or whatever and rescue the beautiful maiden to boot.

And little Ike did things like that every few pages all through the book.

How did he do it? HOW? Why, blame it all, you've plumb missed the point! Don't you see, that's exactly why Ike was the greatest. He just went ahead and did those things. He didn't clutter up the book with a lot of explanations of how. He didn't give away any professional secrets.

That's the way we liked it when I was a boy . . .

*(EDITOR'S NOTE: From his book REMEMBER WHEN, by Don Buchan of Marathon, Iowa 50565, P. O. Box 517. Copyrighted, 1964, and privately printed by the Author. Permission was given by Mr. Buchan to re-publish the above chapter in the Dime Novel Round-up.)

The book consists mostly of nostalgic remembrances of Don when he was a boy in Iowa and at the same time records some of the most general news of the period when he was

growing up, some of it with more or less "historical" note. Some very interesting photographs, also, along with the most interesting chapters in the book. Don is a right good writer and we found the book to be interesting all through and well worth reading in full. He also has authored other books of a similar theme and has written several short stories for some national magazines. However, he says REMEMBER WHEN is not available any longer as he has sold all the copies.

In this little book Mr. Buchan also has a chapter on the James Boys, but it is not from the angle of the many dime novels written about them. He recalls in his youth of hearing the middle-aged and old folks of that time telling first-hand accounts of Frank and Jesse James. This aged folk of his boyhood had been people who were young and even somewhat elderly folks when the James' brothers and other well known frontier characters were on the rampage and whom had first rate knowledge of their exploits, at least from mouth to mouth descriptions of their outrages, and maybe even personal knowledge of them, as this area was not a great ways from where Frank and Jesse operated in their careers of crime, etc.

Mr. Buchan says he read "Nimble Ike" as a youth and that he wishes he could read it again. He is not in our fold, but would like to know if any Round-Upper might have a copy of this old-time thriller, and if so hopes they will communicate with him, the idea being that he might secure the book through the loan of it, thus assuring him a chance to re-read it.

Back numbers Reckless Ralph's Dime Novel Roundup, Nos. 1 to 237, some reprints, 12 for \$1.00 or all for \$21. Sent postpaid. You also get Dime Novel Catalogue, Birthday No. 2, indexes, #1 Pioneer and Scouts of the West.

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Ralph F. Cummings

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